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THE SCULPTURE OF

HENRI MATISSE

COURTAULD INSTITUTE

THE

SCULPTURE

OF

HENRI MATISSE

February 10-28, 1953

CURT VALENTIN GALLERY
32 EAST 57 STREET • NEW YORK

SELFPORTRAIT
Lithograph
10⅞ x 7⅞"

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53.P34

[8]

THE SCULPTURE OF HENRI MATISSE

*by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.**

First Sculptures, 1899-1904

. . . As a student of painting Matisse had gone to school in the Louvre with the masters of the 17th and 18th centuries, but now when he began to work at sculpture he chose as his models the two great 19th-century sculptors of France, Barye and Rodin. . . .

. . . During the winter of 1900 he began his first original piece, the figure of the model Bevilaqua which he called *The Slave* (Cat. No. 3). Matisse went to see Rodin, bringing with him some drawings, in the hope that he might be permitted to work in the great man's studio. Rodin seems to have rebuffed him. In any case Matisse turned to Rodin's leading pupil

*Excerpts from the chapters on sculpture in *Matisse, His Art and His Public* (New York 1951) by Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Bourdelle and worked with him for several months at the studio of La Grande Chaumière.

Matisse did not finish *The Slave* until 1903. The original pose, perhaps influenced by Rodin's *Walking Man*, was fixed in the oil studies of the model in early 1900 but for several years thereafter Matisse had Bevilaqua pose off and on so that he might master in clay the complexities of muscular detail, bony structure and balance. The figure was originally designed with arms which were lost before the plaster was cast in bronze and shown at the Salon d'Automne of 1908.

In 1901, long before he finished *The Slave*, Matisse modeled his first female figure, the *Madeleine* (Cat. No. 1), in which the exaggerated S-curve formed by head and body seems a kind of foil to the masculine rigidity of *The Slave*. The *Madeleine* is modeled with a featureless face and without arms so that nothing detracts from the rhythmic swing of the figure.

[15]

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Besides these works Matisse made several minor pieces during his first three years as a sculptor. In 1900 he modeled a study of a human foot, in 1901 a small study of a horse (Cat. No. 2). In 1903, the year he completed *The Slave*, he made a second version of the *Madeleine* (Cat. No. 4) and also a tiny bas-relief of the head of his son Pierre.

1905-1907

During 1905-1907, the period when he was painting his *fauve* pictures, Matisse made between fifteen and twenty sculptures. Half a dozen of them are small heads (Cat. No. 10, 11, 16); the rest, except for a *Thorn Extractor* (Cat. No. 13), are female figures ranging in size from the little nine-inch sketches to a carefully studied *Decorative Figure* (Cat. No. 17) nearly thirty inches high. . . .

1908-1909

Matisse produced rather little sculpture in 1908 and 1909 but two bronzes, the *Two Negresses* (Cat. No. 21) and *La Serpentine* (Cat. No.

[19]

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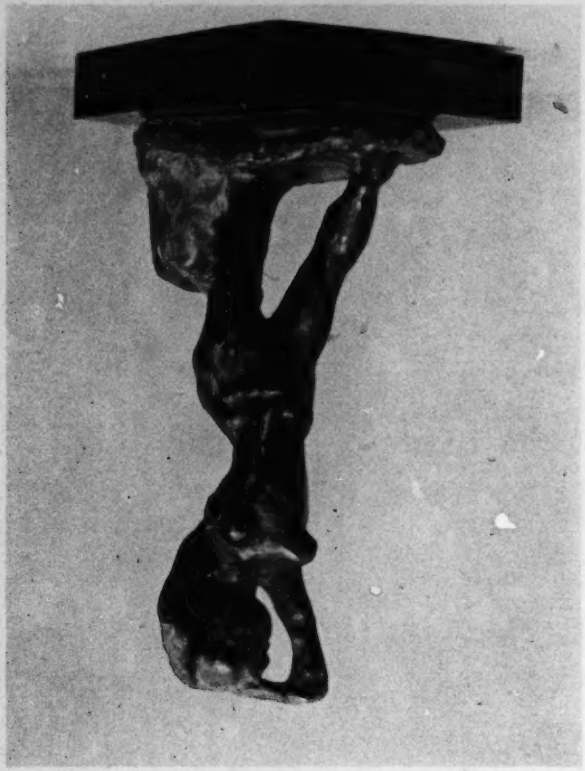
[5]



[4]

24) are among his best. A lesser piece, the *Seated Figure, Right Hand on Ground* (Cat. No. 22), is modeled with a surface so ridged and gouged that even in the bronze one feels the wet plasticity of the clay. The figure is apparently a study for the much larger *Seated Nude* of about 1908 (Cat. No. 19).

The *Two Negresses* is Matisse's only sculptured group of figures, yet in a sense it is one figure, mirrored so it can be seen from both sides at once, a symptom perhaps of Matisse's profoundly sculptural desire to create a work in the round which will hold its interest from any point of view. . . . The *Two Negresses* may well be influenced by African Negro sculpture which Matisse had been collecting for two or three years.

The Five Heads of Jeannette (1910-1911)

Curiously neglected in studies of Matisse's art is one of his most extraordinary works, the five states of the sculptured head, *Jeannette* (Cat. No. 25, 26, 27). . . . Matisse believes that he made four, perhaps all five of the heads within a single year at Issy-les-Moulineaux. The first two states, according to Mrs. Matisse, were done directly from the model, Jeanne Vaderin, "Jeannette," a young woman, who was staying at Clamart while convalescing from an illness.

1927-1930

Between 1900 and about 1912 Matisse produced over thirty pieces of sculpture, one or more practically every year. Then, excepting the tall narrow head of Marguerite (Cat. No. 28) in 1915 and three minor bronzes done at Nice about 1918 (Cat. No. 29, 30), he stopped until 1925. The second great period of Matisse's sculpture begins then with the large *Seated Nude* (Cat. No. 32) of 1925 and continues until 1930 with the *Stout Head of 1927* (Cat. No. 33), the *Reclining Nude II* (Cat. No. 34) and *III* of 1928-1929, two tiny torsos of 1929 (Cat. No. 35, 36), the two over-life-size reliefs, *The Back, II* and *III*, probably of about the same year, the *Tiari* (Cat. No. 37) and the *Venus in the Shell* (Cat. No. 38) both of 1930 after Matisse' return from Oceania. . . .

Two small but distinguished pieces of 1930 complete Matisse's sculp-

ture, excepting the crucifix (1948), and unless he is withholding certain works as he has sometimes done in the past. The *Venus in a Shell* is related in style to the *Reclining Nude, II*, the distortion and compression of the raised elbows carrying upward the columnar torso.

Matisse modeled the *Tiari* very shortly after his return from Oceania during the summer of 1930; in fact it is perhaps the only work done during the ensuing decade to be inspired by a characteristically Tahitian form. The forms of the large tropical flower called *tiari* or *tiaré* Matisse has made into a sculpture suggesting a woman's head surmounted by a strange headdress. . . .

[33]

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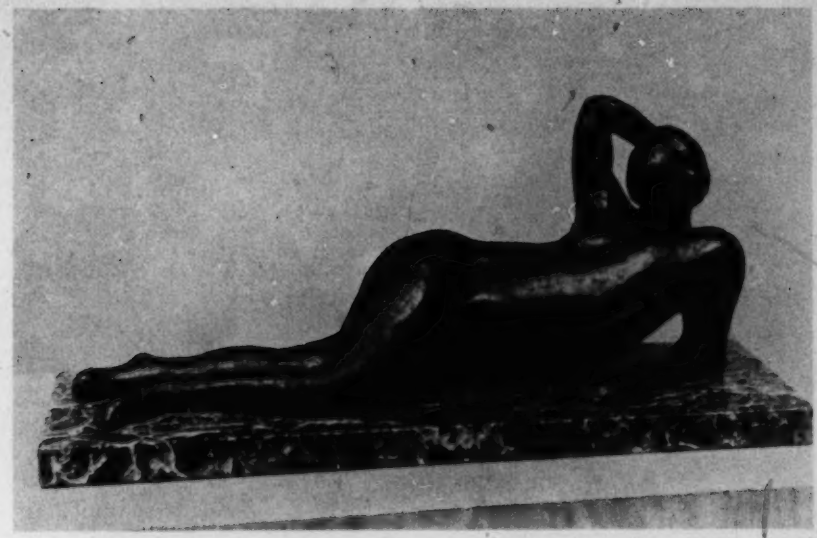
[24]

[38]



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[37]

CATALOGUE

BRONZES*

1 MADELEINE I
1901. H. 23⅝"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Weintraub

2 HORSE
1901. H. 6¼"

3 THE SLAVE
1900-1903. H. 33¾"

4 MADELEINE II
1903. H. 23⅛"
Lent by Mrs. Gertrude Lenart

5 STANDING NUDE (ARMS OVER HEAD)
1904. H. 10¼"
Lent by Miss Pat Simon

6 SEATED NUDE (ARMS BEHIND BACK)
1904. H. 11¼"

7 SEATED NUDE (HANDS BEHIND HEAD)
1904. H. 14"

8 RECLINING NUDE IN CHEMISE
1905. H. 5½"

9 NUDE LEANING ON HER HANDS
1905. H. 5"
Lent by the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection

10 HEAD OF A GIRL
1906. H. 6½"
Lent by the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection

11 SMALL HEAD
1906. H. 5⅜"

12 DANCER
1906. H. 17½"
Lent by Consul General and Mrs. C. F. Hellström

*The complete sculptural *oeuvre* of Matisse consists of 54 bronzes. All major works are shown in the present exhibition except for the three versions of the *Nu de Dos*.

[14]

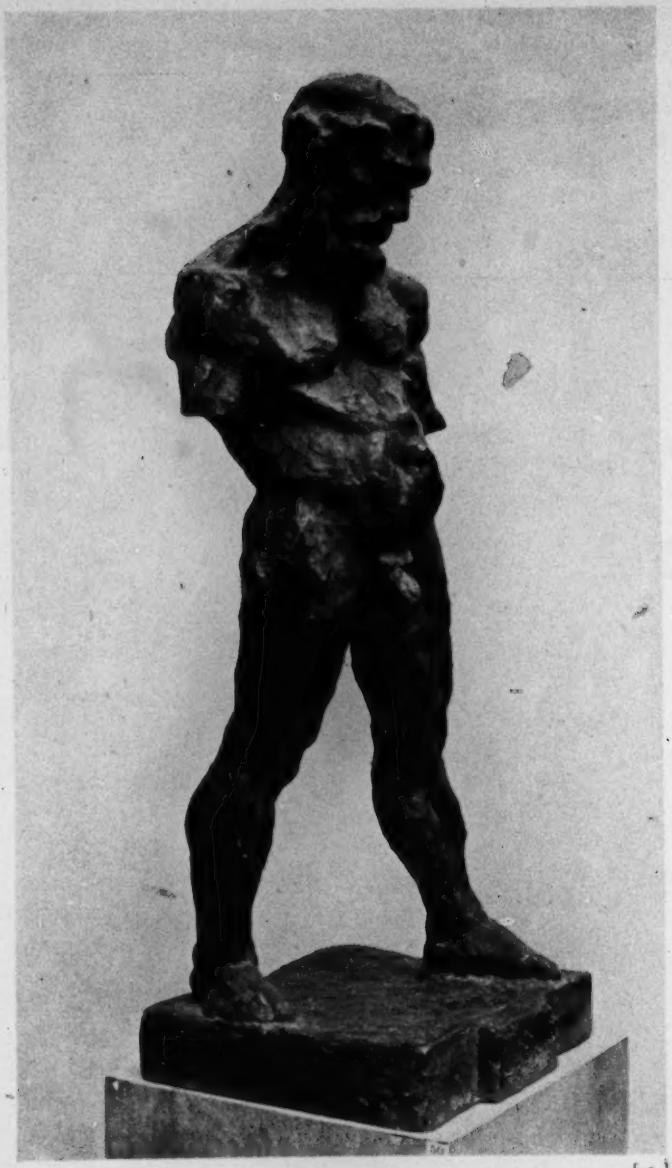
13 *Spinario*
1906. H. 7¾″

14 TORSO (WITH HEAD)
1906. H. 8⅝″
Lent anonymously

15 STANDING NUDE
1906. H. 19″

16 SMALL HEAD WITH CHIGNON
1906. H. 4″

17 DECORATIVE FIGURE
1906. H. 28⅜″



18 RECLINING NUDE I
1907. H. 13½"
Lent by the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection

19 SEATED NUDE
1908. H. 16¾"

20 CROUCHING NUDE
1908. H. 3¼"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Harry I. Caesar

21 TWO NEGRESSES
1908. H. 18½"

22 SEATED FIGURE, RIGHT HAND ON GROUND
1908. H. 7½"

23 TORSO
1909. H. 9¾"

24 *La Serpentine*
1909. H. 22¼"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. R. Sturgis Ingersoll

25 JEANNETTE I
1910. H. 12"
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Harry Bakwin

26 JEANNETTE III
1910-1911. H. 24⅜"
Lent anonymously

27 JEANNETTE IV
1910-1911. H. 24"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George Heard Hamilton

28 HEAD OF MARGUERITE
1915. H. 12½"

29 CROUCHING FIGURE
1918. H. 8¾"

30 FIGURE WITH CUSHION
1918. H. 5⅛"
Lent by the Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection

31 VENUS
1919. H. 10⅝"
Lent anonymously

[31]

[29]

[21]

[17]

32 **SEATED NUDE**
1925. H. 31½″

33 *Grosse Tête*
1927. H. 14½″

34 **RECLINING NUDE II**
1929 (?). H. 7⅞″

35 **SMALL TORSO**
1929. H. 4″

36 **SMALL TORSO**
1929. H. 3″
Lent anonymously

37 **TIARI**
1930. H. 8½″

38 **VENUS IN SHELL**
1930 (?). H. 12″

DRAWINGS • RECENT AQUATINTS

DRAWINGS

39 **HEAD WITH NECKLACE**
1929. Charcoal. 12 x 9½"

40 **FRUIT**
1937. Pencil. 16 x 20¾"

41 **SEATED GIRL**
1939. Charcoal. 24 x 16"

42 **HEAD OF A GIRL**
1939. Charcoal. 19 x 14¾"

[45]

[50]

43 **ODALISQUE**
1941. Ink. 10 x 12¾"

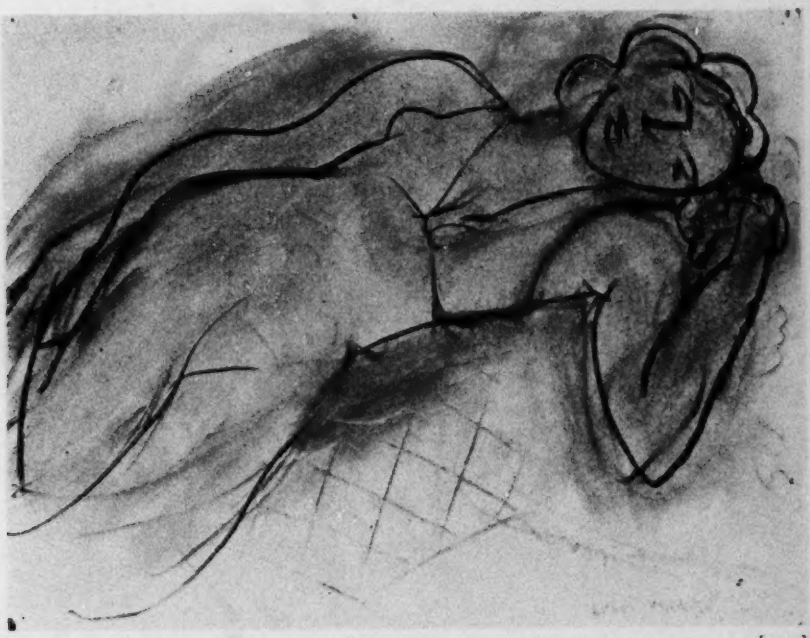
44 **RECLINING FIGURE**
1941. Charcoal. 16 x 20¾"

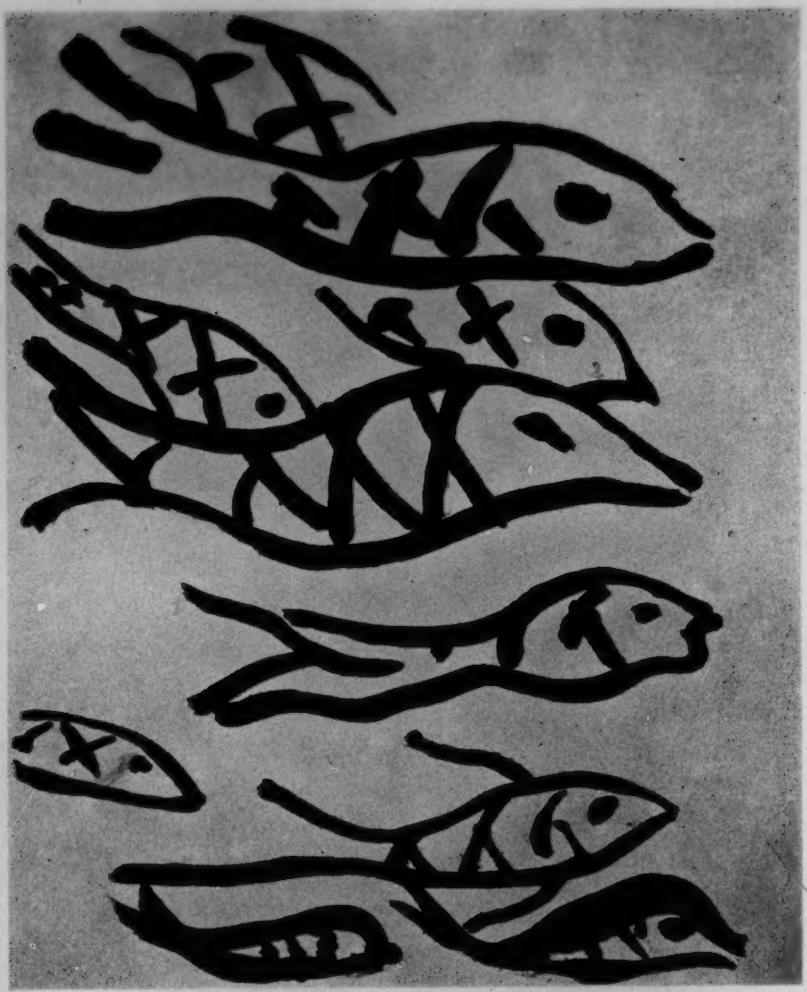
45 **SEATED GIRL**
1941. Ink. 16 x 20¾"

46 ***Hommage à Henri Laurens***
1942. Ink. 20½ x 15½"

47 **FRUIT**
1942. Charcoal. 16 x 10¼"

48 **BUST**
1944. Charcoal. 24 x 16"





13½ x 11"

49 **HEAD OF A GIRL**
1944. Charcoal. 24 x 16"

50 **TWO GIRLS**
1944. Ink. 15¾ x 20½"

51 **WOMAN READING**
1945. Charcoal. 20¾ x 15¾"

52 **HEAD WITH BRAIDS**
1947. Ink. 16 x 10¼"

53 **HEAD OF A GIRL**
1947. Ink. 22 x 14⅜"

54 **HEAD OF A GIRL**
1947. Ink. 15¾ x 10¼"

55 **HEAD OF A GIRL**
1947. Crayon. 18¾ x 12¼"

56 **STILL LIFE WITH SEATED GIRL**
1947. Ink. 30 x 22¼"

17 x 13¾" [65]

13½ x 11" [66]

12¼ x 9¾" [68]

12¼ x 9¾" [70]

57 THE PINEAPPLE
1948. Ink. 41¼ x 29½"

58 INTERIOR WITH NUDE
1948. Ink. 22 x 29¾"

59 HEAD OF A GIRL
1949. Charcoal. 16 x 12"

60 HEAD OF A GIRL
1949. Ink. 23¾ x 16"

61 NUDE
1949. Ink. 22 x 14¾"

62 NUDE AND TORSO
1949. Ink. 22 x 14¾"

AQUATINTS

63-75. 1951-1952